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Service-Learning in English Language Courses

Audrey Short

Susan Dudley

Lynn Pelco

Division of Community Engagement

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Service-Learning in English Language Courses

Keywords

service-learning, english, language, higher education, college, english as a second language, community, community engagement

Disciplines

Higher Education

Comments

Presented at the College English Association 2012: Borders, Richmond, Virginia.

Service Learning in English Language Courses

Audrey Short, Susan Dudley, & Lynn E. Pelco

Virginia Commonwealth University
College English Association 2012: Borders
Richmond, VA
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Agenda

- What we do and why we do it
- Incorporation of writing
- Preliminary evaluation data
- Benefits and challenges

Community Engagement & International Students in Higher Education

- Service-learning as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008)
 - Service-learning at VCU refers to an academic class in which students (a) engage in 20 hrs of community service that relates to the class content and (b) reflect on how the community service enhances what they are learning.
- International university students engaging in the community (Reyes, 2009)
- International students doing service-learning (Pirani-Mellstrom & Berson, 2008)

VCU's Co-Curricular Community Engagement Initiatives for International Students



- Hands On Greater Richmond Day
- Stop Hunger Now
- The Giving Heart Thanksgiving Feast

Lifelong Learning

- Adult age 50 & "better"
- Educational & social needs (history, music, dance, fitness, etc.)
- 1.5 hours per meeting
- 5 consecutive weekly meetings
- Educational Presentations
 - Country Introduction
 - Communication
 - Holidays
 - Arts
 - Food

Richmond Public Library

- Open to the public (homeschooled and private school families, retired adults, etc)
- 1 to 1.5 hours per meeting
- 3 to 4 consecutive weekly meetings
- Educational Presentations

Lobs and Lessons

- Elementary & middle school students from 8 community partners.
- Life skills (get along with others, regulate emotions, appreciate diversity, etc.), exposure to college, tennis
- 2 hours per meeting
- 4 to 5 consecutive weekly meetings (except Spring Break)
- Diversity education (posters, crafts, stories); help with homework; tennis

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Small group and one-on-one conversations

Service-Learning Multiple Ways

International Students as Recipients of Service

Recipients of Service:

- ◆ Graduate students in MA of Gerontology, VCU, Medical Campus
 - ◇ *Presentations & discussions*
- ◆ Undergraduate classes: Global ethics/religion, theater, and freshman English
 - ◇ *In & out of class conversation partners*



Writing Opportunities

- Reflections
- Essays
- Storytelling
- Tour brochures
- FAQ sheets

Reflections by Students & Teacher

- ◆ What? So What? Now What?
- ◆ [Tumblr blog](#) (following each other on blogs)
- ◆ Options: Written, Audio, Video
- ◆ Thank you letters

What? So What? Now What?

1. WHAT?

- A. What happened? What did you talk about? What did your conversation partner(s) say?
- B. What did you observe that was different from a previous experience?

2. SO WHAT?

- A. How would you assess, judge, or evaluate what happened or what you learned? Why do you think the people involved acted the way they did or said the things they said? How else could you have interpreted the situation, actions, or words?
- B. How did you feel about what you observed? What makes you feel this way?
- C. What did you learn about yourself through this experience?
- D. How did your conversation partners communicate? How is this communication style different and/or the same as communication styles you are familiar with, including your own?
- E. What connection(s) can you make between what was studied for class and your community-based experience?
- F. What connection can you make between your personal beliefs and experiences and the community-based experiences?

3. NOW WHAT?

- A. How will you be able to use the skills practiced with the community partner in your academic classes and/or the workplace? Skills may be related to but are not limited to teamwork, communication, leadership, problem solving, self-management and self-motivation, work ethic and computers.
- B. What can you specifically do differently next time to have a better experience? What are some examples of specific strategies or techniques that could be used? Write 3 specific steps that can be measured.
- C. What other areas would you like to further develop and what specifically can you do to develop them?

Reflections



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Essays

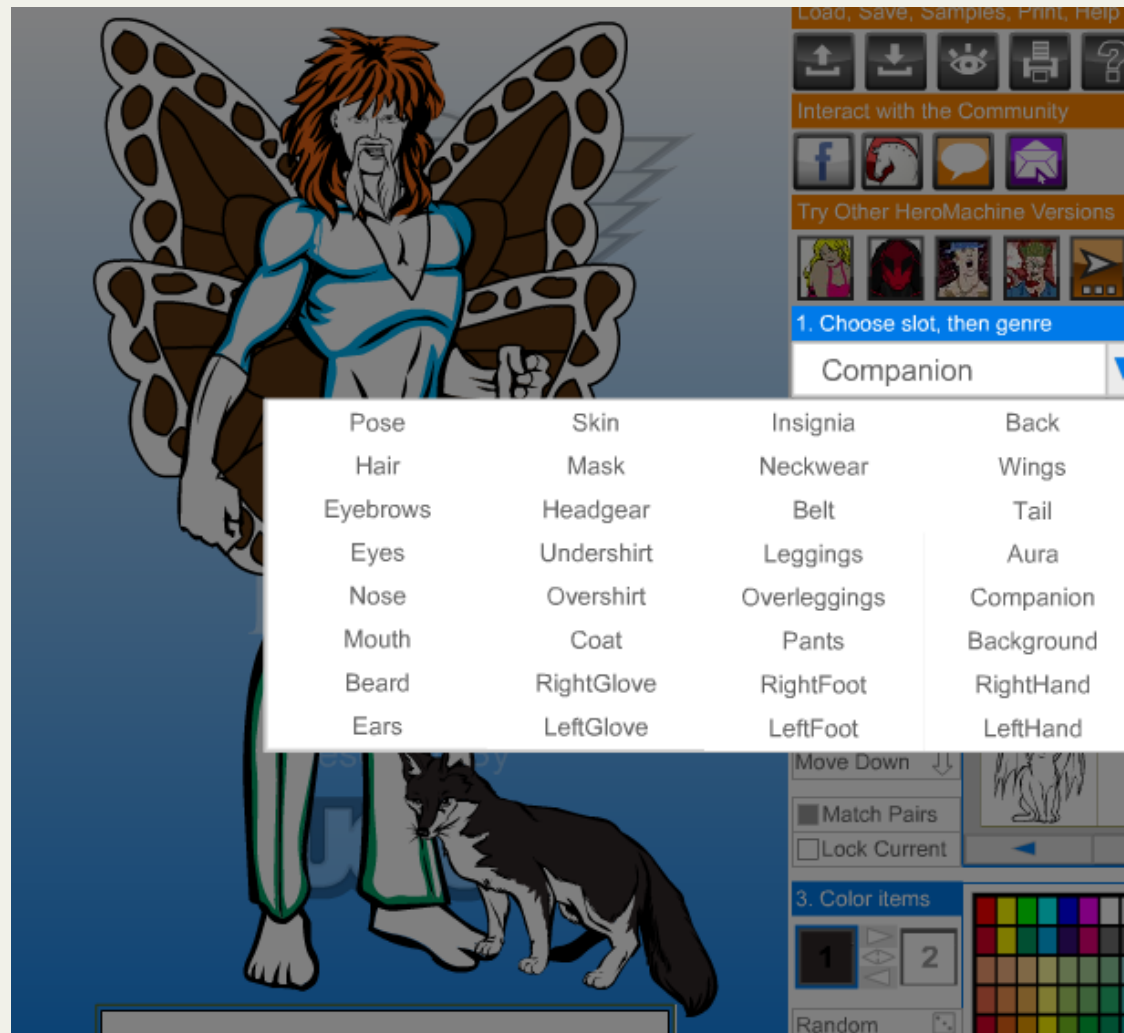
- Rhetorical styles
 - Cause/Effect, Expository, Argumentative, Compare/Contrast
- Sample topics
 - Elderly
 - Retirement; Ageism; Encore careers; Myths and stereotypes
 - Children
 - Educational access, funding inequality; Multiple intelligences
 - Public service institutions
 - Demographics; Services provided; Funding
- Plagiarism

Storytelling

- Possible topics
 - Folktales/fairly tales/fables
 - Historical figures/events
 - Adaptations
 - Changing the events
 - Adding an ending
 - Providing supplemental information
 - Creative Writing
- Format
 - Graphic novel
 - Picture book

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<http://www.ugo.com/games/superhero-generator-heromachine-2-5>



Tour Brochures & FAQ Sheets

Local places of interests for new students
– Community engagement opportunities

Evaluation Tools

- Reflections by students and teacher
- Pre and post service learning survey for students
- Classroom observation coding sheet
- Community partner interview

Pre- & Post- Service-Learning Survey for Students

Section 1: Demographics

Section 2: Social Justice Continuum

ISSUE	NOT A CONCERN	THINK	ACT
Elderly Issues	0	1—2—3—4—5	

Section 3: Community Responsibility

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

A. Being involved in a program to improve my community is important.

E. The government or community should not be responsible for helping people with social problems.

Section 4: Skills and Competencies

Civic Engagement, Problem Solving, Leadership,
Other Academic Skills

Classroom Observation Coding Sheet

Code Definitions:

PNV = Positive Nonverbal Behavior

NNV = Negative Nonverbal Behavior

VER = Verbalizing

Q = Quiet

SCAN #	Student 1		Student 2		Student 2	
1 (1:20)	PNV	NNV	PNV	NNV	PNV	NNV
	V	Q	V	Q	V	Q
2 (1:30)	PNV	NNV	PNV	NNV	PNV	NNV
	V	Q	V	Q	V	Q

Community Partner Interview

Conducted by a familiar third party midway through service

1. *What are the main needs of your clients?*
2. *How have the international students met (or not met) those needs?*
3. *How has communication been between your organization and the course instructor?*
4. *What kind of feedback have you heard from your members? (Can you give any specific examples?)*
5. *Do you have any suggestions for us regarding how to improve what we do?*
6. *Other comments?*

Benefits

- Provide opportunities to connect with other university departments and the local community
- Facilitate dialogue among students about social issues that affect the community
- Motivate student learning through an authentic environment
- Develop a deeper understanding of course material through experiential learning
- Encourage students to become engaged citizens

Challenges

- Develop community relationships
 - Match academic goals with appropriate tasks both for students and community partners
 - Communicate effectively
 - Follow through
 - Handle logistics
 - Bureaucracy (background check requirement, health screenings, immigration regulations, etc.)
 - Time scheduling
 - Time commitment
 - Transportation issues
- Provide quality services
 - Ensure students are prepared
 - How to understand audience
 - How to talk to different kinds of people
 - How to take on leadership roles
 - How to communicate responsibly
 - How to organize their time with partners
 - Be flexible

Contact Us

Audrey Short

aeshort@vcu.edu

Susan Dudley

sddudley@vcu.edu

Lynn Pelco

lepelco@vcu.edu